

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 181437Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8763

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4041

EXDIS

LONDON FOR SAUNDERS AND ATHERTON

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PBOR, MILI, LE

SUBJ: LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH SARKIS

REF: STATE 180797

1. CALLED ON SARKIS AT 1230 JULY 18. FOUND THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT SOUTH BUT ABOUT SITUATION IN GENERAL AND PARTICULARLY ABOUT ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH CHRISTIANS. HE SAID DECISION ON LEBANESE POLICY WITH REGARD TO SOUTH WOULD BE TAKEN TOMORROW. I SAID WE CONTINUED TO FEEL IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT LEBANESE MOVE TROOPS TO SOUTH AS SOON AS FEASIBLE.

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THERE WERE OBVIOUS PROBLEMS, OF COURSE, BUT WE WERE PREPARED TO DO WHAT WE COULD TO HELP. HE INDICATED THAT BOUTROS WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH ME ON THE SUBJECT LATER.

2. PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT NUMBER OF THINGS AND HE WOULD START WITH WHAT MIGHT SEEM LIKE LEAST IMPORTANT BUT WAS REALLY MOST IMPORTANT TO HIM--THAT WAS ECONOMIC

CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUED INSTABILITY. THE GOVERNMENT HAD REQUIRED LEBANESE FIRMS TO PAY THEIR EMPLOYEES EVEN THOUGH THEY COULD NOT GET TO WORK BECAUSE OF SECURITY SITUATION. COMPANIES HAD RELUCTANTLY COMPLIED BUT MANY OF THEM WERE REACHING THE END OF THEIR TETHER. IF SECURITY WAS NOT REESTABLISHED, A NUMBER OF FIRMS WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF WORKERS WOULD BEGIN TO START CLOSING WITHIN THE COMING MONTH AND THIS WAS GOING TO HAVE VERY SERIOUS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES. DI WE HAVE ANY IDEA ABOUT WHAT LEBANESE COULD DO ABOUT THIS? I SAID BASIC PROBLEM OBVIOUSLY WAS SECURITY AND UNTIL SOMETHING WAS DONE ABOUT THAT THE ECONOMY WAS GOING TO SUFFER. IT SEEMED TO ME THE FIRST STEP MIGHT BE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE CLEAR TO EVERYBODY JUST WHAT ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUED INSTABILITY WOULD BE.

3. PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD HAD LONG CONVERSATION WITH SHEIKH PIERRE GEMAYEL EARLIER IN THE DAY. HE HAD TOLD SHEIKH PIERRE THAT KATAEB WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT AND ASKED HIM WHETHER HE HAD EVER STOPPED TO WONDER WHY IT WAS ONLY IN AND AROUND BEIRUT THAT THERE WAS TROUBLE. HE HAD POINTED OUT TO SHEIKH PIERRE THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUED INSTABILITY AND THAT SEEMED TO SHAKE GEMAYEL SOMEWHAT. HE HAD PROMISED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO HELP, BUT SARKIS DID NOT HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF FAITH IN THAT BECAUSE SHEIKH PIERRE DID NOT CONTROL MANY OF THE ELEMENTS IN THE KATAEB.

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4. PRESIDENT SAID THAT BROUGHT HIM TO REAL POINT OF CONVERSATION, ENCOURAGEMENT THE ISRAELIS WERE GIVING TO THE CHRISTIAN MILITANTS. HE THOUGHT WE SHOULD SPEAK VERY CLEARLY TO ISRAELIS AND TELL THEM HE, SARKIS, COULD NOT CONTINUE TO GOVERN COUNTRY UNTIL MILITANTS WERE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. THEY WERE NOT CONTROLLABLE BECAUSE THEY WERE BUOYED UP BY PROSPECT OF ISRAELI SUPPORT. MILITANTS NOW TALKING ABOUT AUGUST 15 AS MAGIC DATE ON WHICH ISRAELI HELP WAS TO BECOME EFFECTIVE. GOL HAD INTERCEPTED MESSAGES IN THIS REGARD AND WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE CONTINUING CONTACTS.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 4041

EXDIS

LONDON FOR SAUNDERS AND ATHERTON

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

5. I SAID WE HAD ALREADY MADE OUR POSITION VERY CLEAR TO ISRAEL. AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAD HAD I DID NOT KNOW HOW MANY CONVERSATIONS WITH WEIZMAN AND BEGIN ON SUBJECT AND WE HAD RECEIVED FORMAL ASSURANCES FROM BOTH THAT ISRAELIS WERE COUNSELING RESTRAINT AND THAT THEY WERE BEING VERY CAUTIOUS IN THEIR AID TO THE MILITANTS. THEY HAD DELIVERED NO HEAVY WEAPONS (ALTHOUGH DANY CHAMOUN TOLD ME HE HAD GOTTEN TWO SHERMAN TANKS FROM THEM) AND HAD CONFINED THEMSELVES ESSENTIALLY TO AMMUNITION. DANY HAD TOLD ME THEY HAD DELIVERED ONLY HALF OF WHAT THE CHRISTIANS HAD ASKED FOR. SARKIS NODDED AND SAID, "YES, FORTY TONS." I SAID DANY HAD INTERPRETED THIS AS MESSAGE OF RESTRAINT. I HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT THE

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ASSURANCES BEGIN AND WEIZMAN HAD GIVEN. IF ON OTHER HAND PRESIDENT HAD SOME SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON SUBJECT WHICH HE COULD GIVE ME, WE COULD RAISE IT WITH THE ISRAELIS.

6. PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD HAVE INFORMATION COLLATED AND WOULD GIVE IT TO ME. I THEN ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THAT IF MILITIAS WERE RESTRAINED SECURITY PROBLEM WAS SOLUABLE. SARKIS SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION IN HIS MIND. SYRIANS HAD NO INTEREST IN FIGHTING A WAR IN LEBANON. HE FELT CERTAIN

HE COULD GET THEIR COOPERATION. PROBLEM WAS CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. HE HAD TOLD PIERRE GEMAYEL TO STOP TALKING ABOUT THE SYRIANS LEAVING AND TO GET HIS MILITANTS OFF THE STREETS. ONCE THE ARMED MANIFESTATIONS OF THE KATAEB DESAPPEARED AND ONCE SOME PROGRESS WAS MADE ON REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY, HE COULD SEND SYRIANS HOME, BUT HE COULD NOT DO IT BEFORE. SHEIKH PIERRE HAD SAID HE WOULD TRY.

7. COMMENT. PRESIDENT REITERATED SEVERAL TIMES IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION THAT ISRAELIS WERE THE KEY. IF THEY DID NOT SUPPORT OR GIVE THE IMPRESSION SUPPORT WAS COMING, KATAEB ABILITY TO CAUSE TROUBLE WOULD BE SO REDUCED AS TO MAKE THAT PARTY MANAGEABLE. I THINK HE IS EXAGGERATING ISRAELI INFLUENCE BUT IF LEBANESE PROVIDE US WITH INFORMATION THAT LOOKS VALID WE SHOULD RAISE IT WITH ISRAELIS. PROBLEM IS THAT LOCAL MILITIA LEADERS ARE EXAGGERATING POSSIBILITIES OF ISRAELI AID FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IF WAY COULD BE FOUND TO DEFLATE THEIR CLAIMS.

8. AFTER ABOVE WAS DICTATED HAD THREE CHRISTIAN DEPUTIES TO LUNCH (MICHEL SASSINE, ORTHODOX; NASRI MAALOUF, GREEK CATHOLIC; AND FARID SERHAL, MARONITE). THEY ALL HAVE IMPRESSION THAT CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL ARE CHALLENGING SYRIANS BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE ISRAELIS WILL PULL THEIR CHEST-SECRET

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NUTS FROM FIRE. SERHAL REPORTED THAT SOME MONKS AT KASLIK, FOR INSTANCE, ARE HOPING FOR ESCALATION IN ORDER BE RID OF SYRIANS ONCE AND FOR ALL. DEPUTIES AGREED THAT CHAMOUN'S AIM WAS CREATION OF "SMALLER LEBANON", WHICH WOULD HAVE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. FRONTIERS HE HAS IN MIND ARE NOT CLEAR.

9. DEPUTIES OF COURSE ARE EXPOSED TO SAME MISINFORMATION, SPECULATION AND RUMOR MONGERING AS EVERYONE ELSE, BUT IT IS STRIKING THAT THEY WERE UNANIMOUS IN ASSUMING CHAMOUN HAS SOME SORT OF ISRAELI ASSURANCES. ASSUMING THESE ASSURANCES ARE HALLUCINATIONS OR FABRICATIONS ON CHAMOUN'S PART, DANGER REMAINS THAT PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE THEM AND ACT ACCORDINGLY. PARKER

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